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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 04218

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SUBJECT: RENEWED CLASHES IN TRIPOLI

1.(U) BEIRUT PRESS REPORTS CONTINUING CLASHES BETWEEN SUNNI FUNDAMENTALIST "ISLAMIC MEETING" FORCES AND PRO-SYRIAN ARAB DEMOCRATIC (ADP) PARTY MILITIAMEN IN TRIPOLI. ACCORDING TO THESE ACCOUNTS, DURING THE JULY 15 FIGHTING ELEMENTS OF THE LAF SECOND BRIGADE (CHARGED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRIPOLI SECURITY PLAN) FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH THE SUNNI FUNDAMENTALISTS AGAINST THE ADP. IF THESE REPORTS ARE CORRECT, THE LAF MAY HAVE COMPROMISED ITS ABILITY TO PLAY ITS ASSIGNED ROLE AS IMPARTIAL ARBITER IN THE CONTINUING DISPUTES.

2.(U) ACCORDING TO THESE ACCOUNTS, SYRIAN EFFORTS TO CONTAIN THIS MOST RECENT OUTBREAK ARE TAKING TWO FORMS. ADP AND TAWHID LEADERS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN SUMMONED BY SYRIAN VP KHADDAM TO DAMASCUS FOR TALKS TO TAKE PLACE THE WEEK OF JULY 22. SYRIAN MILITARY OBSERVERS ARE ALSO EXPECTED IN TRIPOLI ITSELF TO SUPERVISE THE CURRENT CEASE-FIRE.

3.(C) COMMENT. THE SYRIANS HAVE CONSISTENTLY USED THE ADP TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE SUNNI FUNDAMENTALISTS, MOST OF WHOM ARE ARAFAT SUPPORTERS, AND MANY OF WHOM ARE FORMER FATAH MEMBERS WHO JOINED TAWHID WHEN ARAFAT WAS FORCED OUT OF TRIPOLI. THE SYRIANS ARE APPARENTLY CONTENT AT THIS POINT TO LET THE CONFLICT SIMMER WHILE WORKING TO AVOID AN OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE WHICH THEY COULD NOT CONTROL. END COMMENT.

BARTHOLOMEW